

MINUTES  
HAMILTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JULY 29, 2009  
Commissioners Courtroom  
One Hamilton County Square  
Noblesville, Indiana

The Hamilton County Board of Commissioners met in the Commissioners Courtroom in the Hamilton County Government and Judicial Center, One Hamilton County Square, Noblesville, Indiana on July 29, 2009 at 4:30 p.m. President Holt called the meeting to order and declared a quorum present of Commissioner Christine Altman, Commissioner Steven C. Dillinger and Commissioner Steven A. Holt.

**JACKSON TOWNSHIP FIRE AND ALS SERVICE**

Fire Territory

Mr. Andy Emmert, President of the Atlanta Town Council, stated all of the northern entities have held several meetings over the last year and a half to discuss fire district verses fire territory. The ALS (Advanced Life Support) program is important to everyone and is a program Hamilton County helps fund. Atlanta's entire town budget is less than \$240,000; their share of the ALS funding would consume such a large portion of their budget that they would have to fire employees. 2010 is the last year for ALS funding from the County. Emmert requested funding of \$24,000 in order to proceed with a financial study.

Altman informed the group that currently the county has proposed \$165,000 for funding of the ALS program in 2010, which will be approximately \$41,000 for each entity to support ALS. Dillinger asked Altman to review the program and funding. Altman stated it has been asked, in the past, that these entities look at creative ways to provide ALS Service (paramedic service) with a combined northern un-incorporated area. They could run it through Cicero or one entity verses everybody trying to fund their own program. Currently Hamilton County has paid each of the northern townships \$108,750 which went to the township trustees in Adams, Jackson, White River and Wayne. Wayne has chosen to run their ALS program privately through Seals. This year they have found out their contract for one paramedic for 24 hours per day is \$210,000 so they can not run that program unless they receive the full county supplement and they are running on basically no cash if they run it through their fire budget as it exists. Even with full supplement, costs increasing and the property tax caps going in they know where they are going to be. Altman does not know how Sheridan provides fire protection in Adams Township for the entire township and Adams passes through the supplement and they provide the paramedics. Dillinger asked if this issue is being caused by the county's rescinding funding? Altman stated it first started with the paramedic program that Riverview operated. Carmel started their own program because they can provide better service. What that did was shift costs; this is one program that helps fund the fire budget because you can collect monies per run. It has never paid for itself but it is another standby service, just as fire is. The northern tier of the County, except Westfield and Noblesville, don't really have the population base to generate enough paramedic runs to come close to offsetting the cost of a paramedic. Cicero has talked with several entities to try to figure out how they could strategically place one or two paramedics for Jackson across to Wayne. They could not get buy-in from everyone. If you look at the fire runs for Cicero they are doing a lot of mutual aid in the entire County in their runs. Altman stated she does not know how Cicero can maintain what they are doing now because they pick up part of White River under contract, Wayne picks up part of White River under contract but they have been getting most of the county money to support that. They have been trying to encourage all of the companies to cross train so if there are fire department personnel on site they can provide fire protection and paramedic protection. 80% of all fire activity is a paramedic call. Holt asked if it has been \$480,000 why is it \$165,000? Altman stated the program was established and the county paid the full amount of the costs per township at \$108,750. We were supposed to start stepping down that amount before last year, but the program was extended by the County Council another five (5) years. When Riverview got out of the paramedic business, due to the costs, the county went to a cash pool for each entity to give them time to cross train and make alternate plans. We have given them at least eight (8) years of full funding. Altman does not know if the Council will extend the funding, they extended funding last year due to requests by the townships. Holt asked who went to the Council to extend funding last year? Altman stated she knows Wayne Township did, she was not at that meeting so she does not know who else requested funding. Captain Steve Peachy stated Jackson Township and the Town of Cicero requested the funding extension. White River was present at the meeting, Adams was not present at the meeting but were aware of everything they were attempting to do. Dillinger asked if they were asking for the full \$108,000 funding? Peachey stated yes, the economic picture presented five years ago stated the townships had to find some resource for funding. The Town of Cicero had done that in 2001, when they inherited the township paramedic program then all of the funding came to Cicero from White River Township and Jackson Township. They continued to work on funding without having to raise taxes extensively for the current set-up. This would have been a huge financial burden at that time. They requested full funding to continue until the end of 2010. Holt asked what will change from 2010 to 2011? Peachey stated in 2011 there will be no funding. Holt stated that is just because the Council said so? Peachey stated that is correct. Holt stated it is hard to visualize something dramatic will happen in Jackson, Wayne or White River Townships between 2010 and 2011. Altman disagreed; the whole idea was how can the fire companies that service those areas, in terms of county involvement with paramedics, do it as efficiently as possible with a reasonable response time. Altman asked Peachey where they are with those discussions? Peachey stated they have come to a standstill. Altman asked why? Peachey stated he can not give the Commissioners an answer because he has turned it over to his Counsel to talk with the townships to come up with a plan. As far as he knows it has come to a dead halt. White River Township is doing what they can to set money aside and they have put an amount in their budget so in 2011 comes they have a portion to help fund the service.

Dillinger stated looking at 2011 as an ending funding source makes no sense because with the COIT (County Option Income Tax) decline hitting in 2011 the towns will have less money than they do now. Peachey stated correct and their assessed evaluation dropped a little under 10 percent, \$17 million. Holt asked if the annexation with Wayne and Noblesville have changed the dynamics for them? Peachey stated it is beginning to. Altman stated the Wayne

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Township Trustee will be meeting with Noblesville because they just built a new fire station closer to the un-incorporated area. They are going to try to negotiate with Noblesville for coverage. Peachey stated before the new station opened up the bill for Noblesville to do Wayne Township paramedic coverage was approximately \$400,000. The plan was to improve service in that area and assist Wayne Township. With the economy Noblesville has reduced their hiring and reduced the placement of equipment at that station. Holt asked if there has been discussion of closing the station on Greenfield Avenue? Peachey stated he knows that is a rumor but he does not where that stands. Holt stated Wayne could be in a state of flux and maybe that would effect how southern White River is serviced but in terms of northern White River, Jackson and Adams he understands giving them that charge of how to provide the service more efficiently but there has to be somebody that services Jackson, northern White River and Adams regardless. The population is not going to change dramatically in three years, or the assessed valuation. Holt stated we should go to the County Council and advocate for that real estate, respective of who is doing what, that there be a reasonably safe service for ALS. Altman stated she does not disagree but we have to have an exit plan or at some point say we are not going to. It is going to cost X dollars and part of it is we were hoping annexation would cure many of the problems and eventually it will in Wayne, it is a question of time. Altman stated she is not sure how Adams Township is going to survive because when you look at population base and geographic area they are not much different that Jackson, in fact Jackson has more population. It is primarily across the top of the County, the beauty of fire territories and districts is you can go outside county boundaries, which may need to be explored. Altman stated her frustration has been she has not seen people sitting at the table taking a realistic look at plans. An independent study should be done with people who don't have a vested interest, they need to come in and say if they are servicing this area this is what they propose.

Dillinger clarified that Emmert is asking for a fire territory to unite the efforts of the different departments in Jackson and White River Townships? Emmert stated they are looking at Jackson, Atlanta, Arcadia and Cicero, no one else has shown an interest. Dillinger asked what is White River doing? Emmert stated he does not know. Peachey stated his discussion with White River Township is that they are interested in what the funding will be and where the funding is coming from. The Trustee has been setting money aside to continue the paramedic funding, she will not be able to fund the entire \$108,000 because \$15,000 of the \$108,000 goes to Wayne Township for them covering the southeastern part of White River Township with \$5,000 to \$6,000 going to the White River Fire Department to help fund their EMT's that respond before Jackson and Cicero paramedics arrive. They are in the frame of mind if it is not broke don't fix it. Right now they are getting by and doing what they can. Dillinger stated they are getting by because they are receiving funding from the County? Altman stated correct. Peachey stated White River has an interlocal agreement with the Jackson Township Volunteer Fire Corporation and the Cicero Volunteer Corporation for ambulance service. Dillinger asked if the county council cuts their funding by one-third, can they survive? Peachey stated it comes down to the Town of Cicero paying \$230,000-\$250,000 annually to provide paramedic service for Jackson and White River Townships. If this funding goes away and White River could not afford to pay Cicero and Jackson Township could not afford to pay us for this service it would require the Town of Cicero be subsidizing the paramedics service to those two townships and they can not afford to do that. Currently Cicero is collecting \$198,000 of that \$216,000 that comes to the northern townships. Cicero would have to lay off two (2) individuals and they would not be able to provide the service at today's level if they don't have this funding. Peachey stated White River would not get hurt; the Town of Cicero would get hurt. As long as they are an ALS provider the law requires that they respond. They became an ALS provider before this program and funding came into effect. Altman stated that is the other issue, by State law if they get any funding, grants or otherwise, they have to provide mutual aid. If Cicero gets a call and it is in White River and they ask for response they have to respond. It is a deterrent to the Town of Cicero because the paramedic is across the county, which is truly inequitable. The regional approach is going to have to happen. The disparity on COIT, White River Township receives twice as much COIT allocation as Wayne does because they built a building during the time that it carried the COIT over. Peachey stated something is going to have to give, either the fire protection is going to have to be reduced, equipment will have to be reduced or the paramedic service will have to fail to continue to provide the fire protection that is needed in the area. Holt stated or the County Council steps up and provides for the health and welfare and safety for the residents in the northern end of the county.

Dillinger asked how much money would it take to make it continue to work? Peachey stated for the two townships just for the paramedic service it is costing \$250,000 plus the money invested into the program to take care of the residents of Cicero. They can not continue to draw out of Cicero's contingency funds because eventually those funds will not be there. Next year they will be pulling \$30,000 out of Cicero's contingency funds to keep the paramedic program alive with the funding as it stands today. Peachey stated that is with Cicero providing mutual aid to the two townships. Altman stated it does not address Wayne un-incorporated, it will have to come up with cash to bring Noblesville on board and it does not address Adams Township. It does not address the fact that the other fire departments did not make a lot of noise about this money subsidizing the northern part of the county but the urbanized areas do not get any subsidy. Altman can't image that won't be pointed out very soon because the Commissioners were worried on Solid Waste with the urban areas subsidizing a roadside clean-up that was only \$50,000. This is a huge urban support of the un-incorporated areas which we understand to an extent. There has to be the most efficient service possible to continue that subsidy. Altman has not seen serious continuing discussions to get this done and as long as the county keeps fully funding this the discussions will never happen and we are not having efficient government. Holt stated this is where he gets confused, if there is a paramedic for Adams and a paramedic for Cicero that covers northern White River and a paramedic in Wayne that covers un-incorporated in southern White River how more efficient could it be in terms of coverage? Altman stated the Wayne paramedic has 70 transports a year, which is ridiculously low. Altman stated the whole northern part of the county needs to look at how we could strategically position paramedics in the un-incorporated areas under one company. The company becomes what Riverview was, you will need one unit to make

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sure the billing gets out, this is where we are being inefficient. Holt stated when Riverview operated the paramedic service the paramedics were stationed in Wayne, Jackson, and Adams Townships. Peachey stated they were spending quite a bit more money on paramedics than what the fire departments are spending. Holt stated in terms of the position of paramedics they were comparable? Peachey stated towards the end they were, but we were having 15-17 minute response times when the paramedic came out of Noblesville. This enhanced the response that we were able to provide. There is a county ordinance stating that ALS needs to be on the scene between 8-9 minutes and we were not meeting that. We placed the paramedics so we met that time. Holt asked if anyone in this service territory thinks the placements are not what they should be now? Altman stated we have wasted resources; we need more resources in one area and wasted resources in areas like Wayne. That is where we need someone to look at this from a detached standpoint, take the politics out, to assign the position geographically to what we need. Altman is advocating a reasonable study to get the thing fixed the way it needs to be fixed. Holt stated you would think the person who controls the purse strings would have an influence on that and Altman certainly did when she was on the County Council and engineered this plan in the first place. Altman stated the point is that we need to come up with a solution that drives exactly what the Governor was pushing, if we are going to fund it. If we are not going to fund it they can provide the level of service they can. Once people come to the door for funding we should have influence to say this is the goal and it can not be perfect. We won't get it without an independent person stepping in and looking at it. Holt asked if efficiency people exist? Peachey stated H.J. Umbaugh will provide a financial analysis to determine a tax rate. The fire union has done a GIS (Geographical Information Systems) study of both White River and Jackson Townships to determine the most efficient placement of fire and medical services and what it would take to get to the national standards, which is unreachable. They have figures that can be worked with regarding placement and efficiency. They do not have figures of how to continue financing fire and medical protection at the current level. Altman stated a territory requires establishing a tax rate the bad thing is that if they don't establish a territory by March 1<sup>st</sup> there will not be a tax rate for the ensuing year. Even if they established a territory now there would not be a 2010 tax rate so we will have to do some kind of stop gap. For the first three years the tax rate is not within the levy limits. Peachey stated it is a two year gap now. Altman stated in two years, given that we are going to hit the crunch with income tax, there are different options that need to be looked at to get us through the next two to three years. Dillinger asked if there is some funding mechanism for the townships that they can go to? Altman stated no, the State has even removed the levy appeal, the townships have no where to go. They have the fire district or territory approach, where they may need to go. Emmert stated the County is saying next year is the last year for funding the current program? Altman stated correct. Holt stated the immediate fix is to go back to the County Council for funding; explaining that with the growth rate in these townships this is not the right time to pull the county funding. Holt stated they should not take it as a given that the money will be gone next year, this defies logic given what is going on right now. The fire district discussions held last year were focused on Jackson Township and that does not fix the ALS program and Holt did not understand this request was ALS driven. Cicero is carrying more than their fair share and it still leaves the Adams, White River and Wayne dilemma. Peachey stated as part of the consolidation discussions, when he prepared a budget for a meeting with the State, the ALS program was included in this budget and it showed complete funding of the program to get away from the county funding. Right now the county funds are a large part of the funding.

Mr. Jerry Cook reported they had three meetings regarding establishing a fire territory with Jackson Township, Cicero, Arcadia and Atlanta, and the last time he knew three (3) of the towns were for establishing a territory with Jackson Township being against. There is more than ALS, it is putting a burden on the Town of Cicero on the fire budget. They have had this burden well over 10 years. With mutual aid it is hard to back off, they have tried, but it has come to the point that they will start coming up with figures for charging for their services. It is unfair for the Town of Cicero to take care of Jackson Township. Two of the entities, Arcadia and Atlanta, do not have a fire tax. It is an overall picture that needs to be addressed. The Town of Cicero is looking at it and trying to find a way they can back off and stay in Cicero. One community has a volunteer fire department and one community does not have a fire department. Jackson Township's service on equipment is decreasing. Cook stated they are very concerned about the fire portion also. Altman asked if this will be part of the review by HJ Umbaugh? Emmert stated yes.

Holt stated the entities involved can form a fire district and their own destiny. If the entities can not come to an agreement then under statute the Board of Commissioners can establish a fire district or territory. Emmert stated it has been said the Commissioners do not want to be involved in this. It has also been said the Commissioners will form a district and you want it to be a district. He has heard the Commissioners want them to do it on their own. Dillinger stated they have not discussed any of this, it is all rumors. Altman stated it is important they know the conflict of interest the Commissioners have, Holt represents Jackson Township and Altman represents Wayne Township and Adams Township. Altman does not know if the Commissioners can vote on this. The best solution is what the communities come up with themselves.

Mr. Joe Robbins, Jackson Township Trustee, stated when mutual aid is discussed they go to Cicero and they don't complain about that. This is what firemen do, they assist each other. They assist the Town of Atlanta for medical service for \$10.00 per year. The last two months Robbins has been trying to find a consulting service on a fire territory. They are still interested in a territory, when the time came in March the majority of the Jackson Township Board voted to not establish a fire territory; they wanted to study it more. They are not neglecting anything, they are still on board. Jackson Township did get rid of equipment; it was equipment that could not pass an inspection. They will be purchasing a new fire truck this year. They are doing their share but they are doing it quietly.

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Dillinger asked if it would behoove them that rather than involving the Commissioners, can't it jointly be worked out without a territory? Peachey stated they need the funding. Dillinger stated he understands that, but if they could set up the coverage for each other and working out the inefficiencies, utilizing the monies they currently have, then establish a number. We need to come up with a number for all of it, utilizing the efficiencies that could be done and then he would have no problem being an advocate and going to the County Council for funding. We are all having hard times but we may be in a position that we have to make choices where dollars are given to other organizations and in his opinion public safety has to come first. If they can come to a conclusion in efficiencies and an amount you need to make that work then the Council could work with them. You need to create your own answers. Altman stated they should come up with a plan of action by February 2010 because if a territory is on the only answer then the form will need to be completed by March 1, 2010. Altman stated if the Council has a commitment from these people that they will work together to come up with the best resolution of the un-incorporated areas she does not have a problem advocating for them also. She has not seen much progress on trying to figure out how to do this for the best for their citizens and the taxpayers.

Mr. Maurice St. Louis, Arcadia Town Council, stated they pay \$20,000 for coverage, which they can not afford. This year they have had to lay off a couple of police officers and a utility employee. They were short \$69,000 for the upcoming budget. As elected officials they have a duty of providing public safety for their citizens. St. Louis would like to see the fire departments work the same as the police departments. If there is a need in the northern part of the county, everyone comes in to assist. The reality is it is all about dollars and they don't have the money to provide the service and they can not get that money anywhere.

[5:26]

Holt asked if all of the Commissioners would be willing to go with Adams, Wayne, White River and Jackson Township representatives and ask the County Council that ALS funding be restored? Altman stated she does not have a problem with that as long as they have a commitment for a study done by impartial people to look at this area and present several options to get the job done. If everyone is willing to sit down at the table and work with a consultant then she has no problem approaching Council to request funding. Emmert asked if the Commissioners will help pay for the study with Umbaugh? Altman moved to find in the Commissioners budget, if we can, the \$24,000 necessary to get them started as soon as possible. Dillinger asked where does Altman propose to take the money from? Altman stated she thinks it is in the \$80,000 we transferred from the transit earmark. Dillinger seconded. Altman stated if it is not available from the Commissioners budget they will request an additional appropriation from the Council. Dillinger stated this would make a great joint retreat topic but they need to bring a solution. Holt confirmed the motion was modified to state the study would be paid for from existing funds or from an additional appropriation from Council? Altman stated correct. Motion carried unanimously.

Holt stated in terms of funding for 2010 can we agree to try to get Adams, Jackson, White River and Wayne and the Commissioners requesting the \$108,000 per township, other than whatever wiggle there is in Wayne with Noblesville, remain in place next year? Altman and Dillinger agreed. Dillinger stated he needs a commitment from the townships that they will not drop the ball, this request will buy them another 12 months and the study would be back telling them what they need to do but it would still require all of them to work together. Emmert stated Umbaugh has stated they can do the study in 60 days. Holt asked if White River is included in the study? Emmert stated the \$24,000 covers Cicero, Arcadia, Jackson Township and Atlanta. Altman asked what are they going to do for that money? Emmert stated they would prepare a financial study and if they decide to form a territory they will go before the State Tax Board, extrapolate the tax rate, tell us what the costs will be for the citizens. Altman asked if this solves the problem with placement of personnel, on coverage area, and response times. Peachey stated the GIS study that has been done has that information. Altman asked if they know where they can place people to get the job done for fire and ALS? Peachey stated yes. Altman confirmed that all they need are the financial numbers? Peachey stated yes, they know what it will cost they need to know how they will finance it. Altman recommended Emmert speak with Umbaugh to negotiate their best deal. Holt stated it seems like there are two different issues, one in terms of fire coverage and the other issue is the cost for providing ALS. Holt stated there is the Jackson Township issue and then the ALS issue for the north, which goes beyond this group. The county will fund the \$24,000 for the study but we will still have the White River and Wayne issue. Altman stated we need to have the entire northern un-incorporated area of the county covered. Altman asked Emmert to tell Umbaugh they have possible funding and negotiate their final number. Altman suggested they interview other firms. Holt asked if we are going to pay for it should the study be done for all Jackson Township and all of the un-incorporated areas? Altman stated it is for all of these townships; Wayne is unique because Noblesville took extra territory. Holt asked do we want to study Adams, Jackson and White River? Altman stated let's leave it to this group; they should study at least the three northern townships and if it makes sense to include Wayne then include Wayne.

[5:35]

Mr. Ron Wilke, Fire Chief of Jackson Township Fire Department, stated the question was asked where is the most efficient placement of ALS for the most rapid and efficient response. As Fire Chief and a citizen it is to the north, a couple of years ago Cicero began taking care of ALS. They have two (2) ALS providers sitting in the same fire house. From a business standpoint that is not the most efficient way to use our people. It would be most efficient to move it north. When the ALS provider responds to the northern areas that is not mutual aid, it is paid for by Jackson Township. To reciprocate Jackson Township Fire responds south, mutual aid is their business. Jackson Township did sell some

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equipment because it was at the end of its usable life. They have specifications for a new engine that they will be sending out to bid.

Mr. Mitch Russell stated this will take everybody. White River has stated in the past that they don’t want to be part of this but this study needs to include everyone.

Mr. Lonnie Whitehead, Cicero Fire Commissioner, stated it is not about Atlanta, Cicero, Jackson Township or the fire department, it is about what they can provide for the best safety at the best dollar for the citizens of this area. With this study they will be able to come up with that. Let’s have the study and move on.

Dillinger moved to adjourn. Altman seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- Present**  
Christine Altman, Commissioner  
Steven C. Dillinger, Commissioner  
Steven A. Holt, Commissioner  
Dawn Coverdale, Auditor  
Kim Rauch, Administrative Assistant to Auditor  
Fred Swift, Administrative Assistant to Commissioners  
Eric Hayden, Cicero Town Council  
Kay Hartley, Cicero Town Council  
Denni Schrumpf, Cicero Town Council  
Jerry G. Cook, Cicero Town Council  
John Culp, Arcadia, Cicero, Atlanta  
Ron Wilke, Jackson Township Fire Chief  
Rob Pryor, Jackson Township Fire Department  
Steven Peachey, Cicero Fire Department  
Christian Herron, Hamilton County Professional Firefighters  
Joe Robbins, Jackson Township Trustee  
Jeff Roberts, Jackson Township Board  
Denny Bozell, Atlanta Town Council  
Robyn Emmert, Clerk-Treasurer Town of Atlanta  
Andy Emmert, Atlanta Town Council  
Mitch Russell, Arcadia Resident  
Todd Gullion, Atlanta Fire Assistant Chief  
Kevin Strausbaugh, Atlanta Fire Chief  
Keith Condra, Atlanta Fire Department  
Lonnie Whithead, Cicero Fire Commissioner  
Dan Strong, Jackson Township Plan Commission  
Maurice St. Louis, Arcadia Town Council

APPROVED  
HAMILTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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ATTEST

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Dawn Coverdale, Hamilton County Auditor